

A billion dollars and change: Lynnwood grows up, literally



Andy Bronson / The Herald

A worker carries a ladder during construction of the seven-story apartment building called CityCenter Apartments on Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2015 in Lynnwood, Wa. Lynnwood is experiencing a jolt of construction with two dozen major projects and more than \$1 billion in development under way or soon to be underway.



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A parking garage deck is worked on as construction of the seven-story apartment building called CityCenter Apartments on Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2015 in Lynnwood, Wa. Lynnwood is experiencing a jolt of construction with two dozen major projects and more than \$1 billion in development under way or soon to be underway.



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A worker talks with a crane operator as he installs a gang form during construction of the seven-story apartment building called CityCenter Apartments on Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2015 in Lynnwood, Wa. Lynnwood is experiencing a jolt of construction with two dozen major projects and more than \$1 billion in development under way or soon to be underway.

Lynnwood's big projects

Current projects

- 1 City Center Senior Housing Apartments
- 2 CityCenter Apartments
- 3 CVS Pharmacy
- 4 Edmonds School District transportation facility
- 5 Lynndale Elementary School
- 6 Reserve at Scriber Lake

Pending projects

- | | |
|--|--|
| 7 Hilton Garden Inn Hotel | 16 Mercedes Sprinter Dealership |
| 8 Evergreen Village Apartments | 17 Keller Supply Building |
| 9 Evergreen Recovery Center | 18 Lynnwood Elementary School |
| 10 CarMax Auto Dealership | 19 Spruce Elementary School |
| 11 Acura Dealership Expansion | 20 Sound Transit |
| 12 EdCC Science, Technology & Engineering building | 21 196th Street SW Improvements |
| 13 Grantwood Apartments | 22 Poplar Way Extension Bridge |
| 14 Lynnwood Place — Phase 2 | 23 Sanitary Sewer Lift Stations and Force Main |
| 15 Alderwood Mixed-Use Apartments | |



By **Jim Davis**

LYNNWOOD — Stand on the corner of 196th and 36th avenues, outside the Lynnwood Convention Center, and you can see the growth coming.

A crane towers to the south, putting up a seven-story apartment building. A couple of blocks to the west, a second crane is building an eight-story apartment building.

"I think the buzz is going out there now that the projects are happening," said David Kleitsch, the city's economic development director. "I think you're going to have a lot more buzz when they start going vertical."

These are big projects for the city that will forever change Lynnwood's skyline, but it's just a harbinger of things to come. The city is expecting a jolt of construction with nearly two dozen major projects in the pipeline.

So far, only six of those developments are under way.

The projects are a mix of public and private investments that will notably add more than 1,600 apartments to the city.

In all, the city expects more than \$1 billion worth of construction in the next four years.

Engineer Chevy Chase, whose firm CG Engineering is working on a couple of the early projects, said he's not surprised by the amount of development coming to Lynnwood.

"It seems like it's time for it to me," Chase said. "We had this long recession and there was pent-up demand. It seems like it's long overdue."

Now, the city is trying to get ready for all the new people — and the traffic and demands for public service that will entail.

"There are lots of moving parts right now, but we're trying to get it all on the same train tracks," Lynnwood Mayor Nicola Smith said. "So we're ready for our growth and will be excited about it."

Two of the most visible projects already begun are the seven- and eight-story apartment complexes near the convention center.

The CityCenter Apartments is to the south of the convention center. It will include 347 units and is an affordable housing complex.

To the west is the 308-unit City Center Senior Living Apartments. Both projects are in what the city envisions as Lynnwood's City Center, a planned downtown for a city that never developed one.

A third apartment project is just getting started, called the Reserve at Scriber Lake Apartments, adding 295 units in a five-story building by the lake near Highway 99.

Also under way is work on the Edmonds School District's maintenance and transportation facility, visible off I-5 in south Lynnwood, and Lynndale Elementary School, in west Lynnwood.

In the coming-soon category: Developers have submitted plans for a 150-room, six-floor Hilton Garden Inn Hotel just to the south of CityCenter Apartments, and the 231-unit Evergreen Village Apartments, along Highway 99.

The city expects three more major apartment complexes to move forward, including the second phase of Lynnwood Place, the mixed-use development at the Costco near Alderwood mall. The Edmonds School District is to build another elementary and add a second story to a third elementary.

Edmonds Community College has its own plans for a \$36 million science, engineering and technology building on campus. The project is at the top of the wish list for the state's community colleges and could be funded as early as this year.

Together, the projects represent a massive investment.

"With the rate of development seemingly accelerating, there are lots of reasons to think that the next 10 to 15 years is going to be Lynnwood's decade," said Paul Krauss, the city's community development director.

Lynnwood typically approves about \$50 million worth of development in a typical year. Last year, the city approved \$201.5 million worth of construction projects. The city expects another \$200 million in construction this year and another \$200 million of construction projects in 2017.

Then, in 2018, Sound Transit is expected to start on the \$400 million Lynnwood segment of light rail. In all, that's more than \$1 billion in construction

And the city isn't really seeing the development yet that will happen when light rail reaches the City Center by 2023.

Could another recession put a damper on growth? Of course, Krauss said.

"Economic cycles come and go. God forbid they will ever be as severe as the last one," Krauss said. "You have boom times and you have times when things go slow."

But that construction is coming. A recession may delay some development, but eventually it will be built, Krauss said.

With so much construction planned, people have expressed concerns to Mayor Smith.

She said the city has worked to push development away from neighborhoods and into the City Center or around Alderwood mall, which is considered a regional growth center, or along Highway 99.

As Kleitsch puts it, the city is trying to protect its neighborhoods.

Still, there will be challenges, particularly with traffic in a city that already attracts large numbers of out-of-town shoppers to Alderwood mall or to other retailers and restaurants.

Two major road projects are planned to help with the traffic headaches. The city of Lynnwood already has \$20 million to widen 196th Avenue from the Convention Center to the west, to Fred Meyer, a little less than a mile.

The work would add a lane in each direction, plus wider medians and wider sidewalks. There also will be bus lanes.

The city is also hoping to build a \$30 million bridge west of Lowes, across I-5. That project, called the Poplar Way Bridge, would create a new route for traffic getting off the freeway to get to Alderwood mall.

Smith said that city staff is trying to figure out how to provide police and fire services and parks to so many new people.

She said she's not concerned that so many of the new housing projects are apartments.

"We found a lot of young people moving into Lynnwood — it's their lifestyle not to be burdened with a mortgage payment," Smith said. "They would much rather be flexible and be mobile."

She said those apartments will also provide needed housing for the city, which is expecting to add 20,000 residents within 20 years.

The affordable-workforce CityCenter project will be a place to live for many of the city's restaurant and retail workers. The City Center Senior Housing Apartments will provide housing for older people who want to live in the community.

Other projects are planned to provide a diverse stock of housing for the city, including Lynnwood's first development with homes reaching up to a million dollars, near Hall's Lake.

Nearly half of the new apartments coming to Lynnwood will be built in the City Center area around I-5 and 196th Avenue.

That, along with the new hotel and coming light rail and a plan to add City Hall in the area, will energize the City Center, bringing an urban feel to that part of the community. When those people arrive, restaurants and shops are expected to follow, Kleitsch said.

Chase, the engineer whose company is working on the CityCenter Apartments, said he expects the projects will transform that area.

"I think there's a domino effect," Chase said. "As they'll start all that work that whole area is going to change."